

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL  
LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN (2011-2026)



**EXAMINATION IN PUBLIC:**

**Matter 4: Housing Provision - Allocated Sites**

**Matter 8: Infrastructure**



**Matter 4: Action Point 3**

*Council to explain the wider authority's plans for education provision, in particular how the LDP supports the ambition of the education department and how developer contributions will deliver improved education provision.*

**Matter 8: Action Point 3**

*Council to clarify how education provision will be funded by contributions at allocated sites (particularly post-April 1<sup>st</sup> now that pooling of contributions has been restricted).*

**Council's Response**

**The Council's Plans for Education Provision**

In September 2008 the Council announced the intention to review educational provision across the County Borough. The review would assist the Council in ensuring that the right schools were in the right places and that those schools were capable of delivering an educational service of the highest standards.

The Council has adopted four key principles underpinning the approach to the delivery of its school improvement programme. They are:

- standards in educational provision;
- the need for places and the accessibility of schools;
- the quality and suitability of school accommodation;
- effective financial management.

The Directorate of Education, Leisure & Lifelong Learning holds detailed information on educational performance, pupil numbers, schools organisation and capacities and the suitability of the building stock.

Consideration of the key principles in the context of this evidence base demonstrated that the improvement programme for schools (Strategic School Improvement Programme (SSIP)) in Neath Port Talbot was necessary and required a comprehensive and structured approach.

Having the right schools in the right places and ensuring that they are 'fit for purpose' is fundamental to the programme's success. In relation to a number of areas of provision, the Council decided that action needed to be taken. The improvement programme focuses on

raising educational standards and supporting continuous improvement. Integral to the programme is the delivery of high quality educational experiences that encourage and support pupil development - experiences that meet the aspirations of young learners, enhancing and enriching their lives and their life opportunities.

The SSIP represents a significant process of change, these changes will involve the building of new schools, remodelling schemes, the amalgamation and closure of some schools and some different ways of working.

There is a clear expectation that all local authorities should use funding for education cost effectively. This expectation is reinforced by the Welsh Assembly Government, Estyn and the Wales Audit Office.

In a recent inspection, Estyn, the Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales, rated Neath Port Talbot as good for its access and school places arrangements. The inspectors found evidence of effective decision-making and prioritisation about school improvement and school organisation. They also found that the SSIP has led to a series of decisions and proposals that are well attuned to the specific needs of young people and their communities. In their report, the inspectors highlight the need to reduce surplus places in Neath Port Talbot schools in line with the key principles in the SSIP and require the Education Service to action plan accordingly.

The Council can report significant progress thus far in implementing the SSIP.

- **Primary Schools - Awel Y Mor, Sandfields, Port Talbot**

Awel y Môr Primary School, representing an £8m investment, is a brand new state of the art primary school for approx.300 pupils opened on the site of Glanymor Primary school in September 2013. The new school has replaced both Glanymor and Tir Morfa Primary Schools and will provide an exciting and innovative learning environment designed to a high specification to meet the needs of the local community.

The school has *state of the art* facilities including well designed Foundation Phase and KS2 learning environment; a purpose built food preparation room, fitness studio, a 14 place Pupil Inclusion Centre, community learning rooms, and family conference/meeting rooms.

- **Secondary Schools - Ysgol Newydd (Bae Baglan)**

Construction work has commenced (March 2015) on the new 3-16 age school on Western Avenue, Sandfields, Port Talbot. This facility will replace three existing secondary schools:

- Cwrt Sart Community School, Melincryddan, Neath;
- Glanafan Comprehensive School, Port Talbot;
- Sandfields Comprehensive School, Port Talbot.

The new school will also provide facilities to replace the Traethmelyn Primary School which is currently located adjacent to the existing Sandfields Comprehensive School site.

The development costing £40m is being supported by a 50% grant from the Welsh Government's *21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Programme* with the remaining 50% coming from the Council's own resources.

The new facility will cater for 1,500 pupils and will encourage community use by providing sports facilities and other areas in the complex such as performance spaces, meeting rooms and conference facilities for both academic and vocational purposes.

- **Welsh Medium Education**

With the development of the Ysgol Newydd (Bae Baglan) underway, the existing Sandfields Comprehensive School site also provides the opportunity for a Welsh medium secondary school to be established in the south of the County Borough linked to the existing Ysgol Gyfun Ystalyfera 3-18 Welsh medium school located in the north of the County Borough.

Ysgol Gyfun Ystalyfera Welsh medium secondary school will also benefit from a £17m investment with a new teaching block having received planning permission and due to become operational from September 2016.

- **New build Primary school at Briton Ferry**

The development of the Ysgol Newydd (Bae Baglan) also releases Cwrt Sart Comprehensive school site for a new build primary school which will replace Brynhyfryd Primary, Llansawel Primary and Ynysmaerdy Primary schools in 2018.

### **How does the LDP support the ambition of the Education Department?**

A key principle underpinning the SSIP initiative is ensuring school provision and school populations are more effectively aligned - right schools in the right places. The SSIP is an iterative programme that seeks to support the delivery of stronger communities; identifying and responding to demand for school places, and anticipating future need through close working and regular dialogue between the planning policy section and the education department.

The strategy of the LDP aims to facilitate growth within Neath Port Talbot with a focus on the Coastal Corridor coupled with a reinvigoration of valley communities.

The urban towns of Port Talbot and Neath are identified as the County Borough's most sustainable settlements whilst in the valleys Pontardawe and Glynneath are identified as settlements in which to focus development to ensure the benefits of development and regeneration are maximised.

The establishment of a settlement hierarchy within the LDP is a means of delivering stronger communities and the identification of settlement limits ensures that new development is focussed in the most appropriate locations.

### **Strategic Regeneration Area (SRA) - Coed Darcy**

The Coed Darcy Strategic Regeneration Area (Policy SRA1) will include a number of new educational facilities to support the needs of the new residents and these will be funded privately by the developer having been secured as part of the Section 106 agreement.

- **Primary Schools**

It is proposed that two primary school facilities will be provided with detailed design work and pre-application discussions underway in relation to the first school to be located in the northern part of the overall Coed Darcy SRA.

A second primary school facility is proposed in the southern part of the Coed Darcy SRA and will be developed in a phased manner to reflect the wider development progress.

- **Secondary School**

Secondary school provision will be accommodated within a single site and will be developed in two phases.

### **Additional Demand**

The employment led approach has identified a level of population change over the plan period that is consistent with the 2011-Based Population Projections - 10 Year Migration Variant. This population projection would entail a potential increase in the school age population over the plan period. This potential increase in demand will need to be matched by a commensurate capacity within the schools system to accommodate this additional need.

The Council is confident that where an increase in capacity is needed, this can be facilitated by the implementation of the SSIP/21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Programme together with the developer funded facilities as needs arise, such as at Coed Darcy, and that this will be in alignment with the additional demand for school places over the plan period.

The LDP therefore seeks to align new development with the level of existing and proposed infrastructure, including educational facilities.

### **How will Developer Contributions deliver improved education provision?**

*(How education provision will be funded by contributions at allocated sites (particularly post-April 1<sup>st</sup> now that pooling of contributions has been restricted)*

The new developer-funded schools facilities at Coed Darcy will make a significant contribution to an enhanced educational provision within the County Borough over the plan period. Other developer contributions will be assessed and secured on an 'as needs' basis and as opportunities arise.

New housing can place added strain upon existing educational infrastructure and it is therefore appropriate that proposals for residential development are assessed in this context. The Infrastructure Delivery Plan<sup>1</sup> provides an assessment of the current and future education provision within Neath Port Talbot which sets out the changes proposed under the SSIP. This document will be reviewed and updated on a regular basis.

From analysing the population growth in school age children over the plan period and comparing it against the new schools proposed within the County Borough it is expected that in broad terms the additional demand for school places will be matched by the provision of new capacity.

Notwithstanding the new schools proposed over the plan period, it is possible that mitigation maybe sought from a number of new residential developments that may place localised strain on the ability of the existing schools infrastructure to accommodate any additional demand.

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<sup>1</sup> Document Ref: EB03.

An indication of the need for developer contributions for each of the allocated housing sites is proposed for inclusion within the Plan (subject to the Inspectors' decision on the Council's response to Action Point 2.3). However, it is likely that the provision of educational infrastructure will exhibit variations over time and for different communities within the County Borough and as a result the Council will encourage early engagement with developers to agree the need for and the scale and nature of contributions in relation to individual proposals. In this way site requirements may be reflected in land values prior to planning permission being granted which should help reduce uncertainty and speed up the planning application process.

Where a planning obligation is considered essential, it must have a relevant planning purpose and must always be related and proportionate in scale and kind to the development in question. The need for a planning obligation will be established by comparing the capacity of existing educational facilities within whose catchment area the proposed development site is located with the estimated number of additional pupils generated by the proposed development at the time of the planning application. A planning obligation will be expected only where existing schools cannot provide for the estimated number of additional pupils arising from a proposed development. The level of contributions will be reviewed and updated on a regular basis.

The draft<sup>2</sup> Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG)<sup>3</sup> provides guidance on the approach the Council will take in the event that developer contributions may be required. It seeks to introduce an element of certainty and transparency into the process by establishing in a consistent manner the level of developer contributions that may be required during the consideration of a planning application.

The SPG also identifies how the Council will engage with developers and other council departments to arrive at an equitable solution and the ways in which any financial contributions will be utilised.

Planning obligations may involve financial contributions towards the upgrade of existing facilities, either school buildings or associated school facilities such as sports and recreational space or: 1) new additional classrooms; 2) improved or replacement classrooms; 3) other school related facilities such as playing fields; and 4) associated appropriate accessibility and efficiency measures including highway works.

In the context of schools provision it has not been the norm to seek developer contributions. Indeed, Coed Darcy (and previously the village development at Coed Hirwaun) aside, it has not been deemed necessary thus far for developers within Neath Port Talbot to make significant financial contributions to educational provision as a consequence of any development proposal as, until now, there has been sufficient capacity within the existing school estate to accommodate additional pupil numbers.

Where developer contributions are considered to be appropriate in the context of the prevailing circumstances, the Council does not anticipate the need to pool contributions in a manner which is inconsistent with the restrictions placed upon it by the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Regulations.

## Summary

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<sup>2</sup> The SPG is a draft document and will be subject to further refinement and subsequent consultation with all interested parties.

<sup>3</sup> Document Ref: SD33

The LDP strategy and the SSIP/21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Programme can be seen to be complementary and self-supporting with alignment between the spatial distribution of new development and investment in new and improved educational infrastructure. There is a strong working relationship between relevant departments within the Council and this allows for continuing dialogue as the implementation of both the LDP and the evolving SSIP progresses.